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**DISPARITIES IN ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: A WHITEPAPER
TO FAVOR THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED AND SOCIALLY
MARGINALIZED IN SUDAN**

Abstract: *alongside its social and cultural role, higher education is, and will continue to be, central to Sudan's performance in the twenty first century. It is the key mechanism through which knowledge is generated, preserved and passed on. Since higher skills significantly influence life chances and earning potential, wider and fairer access to higher education is a question of basic social justice. To succeed in widening access to poorer students over the coming years. It is in the interests of the society that there are no caps on talent in Sudan. Fairer access to university for the educationally disadvantaged but able sudanese pupils has to remain a key concern. In this paper we set out our strategy for sustaining a quota system for higher education to help rectify the damaged social fabric in war-torn areas of Sudan by temporarily constitutionalizing positive discrimination in education.*

Keywords: *social justice, higher education, generation of knowledge, Sudan.*

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ДИСПРОПОРЦИИ В ДОСТУПЕ К ВЫСШЕМУ ОБРАЗОВАНИЮ: БЕЛАЯ КНИГА В ПОЛЬЗУ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИ НЕБЛАГОПОЛУЧНЫХ И СОЦИАЛЬНО МАРГИНАЛИЗИРОВАННЫХ СЛОЕВ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ В СУДАНЕ

***Аннотация:** наряду со своей социокультурной ролью, высшее образование играет и будет продолжать играть центральную роль в деятельности Судана в XXI веке. Это ключевой механизм генерации, сохранения и передачи знания. Поскольку навыки существенно влияют на шансы преуспеть в жизни и на заработок, широкий доступ населения к высшему образованию и более справедливое распределение шансов получения образования являются вопросами элементарной социальной справедливости. Задача состоит в том, чтобы студенты из бедных слоев населения получили образование. В интересах же общества Судана заключается цель дать талантливым людям шанс раскрыться. Поэтому важно, чтобы суданские учащиеся смогли получить высшее образование. В этой работе мы изложили нашу стратегию сохранения системы квот для высшего образования, чтобы помочь исправить социальную несправедливость в пострадавших от войны районах Судана путем временного закрепления в конституции позитивной дискриминации в образовании.*

***Ключевые слова:** социальная несправедливость, высшее образование, генерация знаний, Судан.*

Introduction.

Disparities in access to higher education has always as always been quandary in underdeveloped countries where decades of consolidation and unwise distribution of wealth and authority. Have fueled inequality. Conflicts and especially armed ones hinder capacities to proper performance and effective planning for development. The return to peace and normal life by implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement after the December Revolution in Sudan in 2019 is expected to pave the way for system reform and improvement. The Juba peace agreement has safeguarded the basic human

rights, that should be incorporated in the national interim constitution and in some constitutions of states. These basic rights particularly those related to higher education has to be respected and observed. As a consequence of prolonged war, the future realities associated with transition and recovery has not been seriously looked into. The parties of the conflict appear consumed by a military contest to the exclusion of other perspectives. Yet, with the passing of time, the impact and damage being created by the conflict upon people and their societies is making the future task of healing and reconstruction a longer, complicated and more expensive task. Higher education reforms are hence required and imperative. They have to be multi-dimensional and encompassing a variety of areas. A starting point in reforming the system, is the concentration on the structural changes. Higher education has to be more professional, neutral and independent. Social and human development needs of the country have to be met. State control and interventions are to be minimized and more autonomy has to be provided for higher education institutions (Ramadan, 2007). The adoption of new teaching and learning methods as well as curricula based on new information and communication technology. All are serious considerations in higher education, no (Ramadan, 2007.) it just for Sudan, but for many other countries

Educational Quota policy Reform: We will set out proposals that are intrinsically linked and will directly affect the proper implementation our suggested reform as follows.

Admission_Policies: Raising the participation rates in higher education of young people from poorer backgrounds and those facing disadvantages. This includes recognizing that the advice and guidance that young people receive and the choices they make at age 14 to 16 are critical to their subsequent experience in higher education;

Expansion_Continuing to increase the range of routes into higher education: widening part time study and workplace-based courses to ensure that other student won't suffer and our reform won't backfire

Funding: As well as Federal funding, businesses are encouraged or play active roles in sponsorships and trainings to guarantee that our suggested reform get the resources needed.

Disparities: Disparities in access to higher education in Sudan are a reality. the need to maintain a quota system as a means to redress current disparities, there is need for a system that targets disparities based on the ethnic and the socio-economic status of candidates' families. Lack of learning opportunities is fuelling early marriages for some children. One of the problems in Darfur region in particular and the war-torn areas in general is facing is early marriages but if children are left to continue with their education, it will help prepare them for life. If they get educated and find a job, they are in a better position to make sound decisions.

This quota system, is based on students' origin, rather than merit alone, and aimed to be implemented in the next 10 years to come and should act as a form of affirmative action for students from the country's war-torn regions due to their perceived regional underrepresentation at universities.

This quota system is aimed at addressing the gap that exists between students from well-established secondary schools that have everything they need to study and those from community day secondary schools mainly located in poor neighborhood and war-torn regions of Sudan that are in appalling conditions. The difference between both is evident, especially in terms of resourcing.

Who are we targeting?

The economically disadvantaged and the socially marginalized.

- Pupils from the war -torn regions of the country (Darfur region, Southern Blue Nile, Nuba Mountains)

- School children of the 2million families internally displaced dwelling in appalling conditions in the inner city

- School children who are still living with their families in refugee camps in the neighboring countries

- The socially marginalized members of the society including religious minorities.

How we will ensure that all those who have the ability to benefit can get access to higher education?

- 1) «We will improve the advice and encouragement that students from target regions receive earlier in their education with respect to setting their sights on university.

2) «Many universities are developing new ways to use contextual data in their admissions procedures to assess the aptitude and potential to succeed of those from poor backgrounds. We believe this is a valid approach and hope our universities will use it [2].

3) «We advise the Government to take on further action that could be taken to widen access to highly selective universities for those from underprivileged backgrounds and to ensure that measures for wider access are prioritized most effectively and do not suffer in a time of greater fiscal constraints» [2].

Higher Educational Quota Bill. Marshal plan. (2023–2033).

The backbones of the Educational Quota and the proposed policy changes are:

Admission policy:

4) We will Increase student intake at all institutions and reform admission policy (from elite students to all). The number of students in public institutions that increased from 4,000 in the early eighties to 350,000 in 2006 and 472,000 in 2008 [3]. Is aimed to reach 600 000 by 2032.

5) Target students will be given incentives up to 15 per cent less than the minimum corresponding score for the general admission determined by genera for the next 10 years in the undergraduate level.

6) If target students graduated with first class or upper second, will be eligible for a fast track route for Masters and Doctorate level (suggested quota is 20%.)

7) We will allocate graduates from the affected regions a 20% quota in Academic and administrative positions.

8) The Sudan Higher Education Statistics Agency should publish information on student admissions at university, college and course level, with more detail on pupils backgrounds. This should be published annually, with year-on-year progress tracked. It should be provided in a format that enables a transparent assessment of the effectiveness of our proposed policy.

9) All universities and Regional universities in war-affected regions should work with schools to ensure that higher education related information, advice and guidance, is properly communicated.

10) There is a wealth of data collected in this whole area, but the overall picture can be confusing. We will ask the relevant bodies to collate meaningful information on student background and work on creating a robust means of measuring and presenting the data in a fair, transparent, and accessible way through HESA to assess implementation

Funding:

11) «The Government should use the opportunity of its review of the impact of variable tuition fees to consider a radical reshaping of the student support system. It should initiate a national debate on the trade-offs between higher fees, growing student places and increasing financial support for students. It should consider fairer financial support for those undertaking postgraduate and part-time courses, more targeted packages of financial support for students from average and less well-off families, and new support for students living and learning at their local university, including ‘fee-free’ higher education» [2].

12) The Ministry of Higher Education Funding Council should examine how to remove the artificial and increasingly indefensible division between part-time and full-time higher education in relation to funding, regulatory and student support frameworks so that part time students of the affected regions continue to benefit from our suggested policy

13) Our expectations of business will continue to rise: they need to be active partners with universities, not passive customers.

Expansion:

The long-term solution for tackling disparity system, rests in the continuous expansion of capacity for public universities in Sudan. Government and the private sector must collaborate in expansion and construction of new universities.

14) Consider the geographical distribution of universities in different states of Sudan including rural areas to avoid concentration of institutes in the capital and to reduce cost of travelling and accommodation. Now 70% of private HEIs are located in the capital city of Khartoum [1].

15) Open more public chances private higher education institutions and that relate educational programs with the local environment and the needs of society [4].

16) Sudan ministry of Higher Education should prioritize investment in e-learning infrastructure to extend the possibilities of remote and online learning.

17) Universities and colleges, working with the Government, should make the concept of 'Higher Education within Further Education' one that is universal across the country so that many more mature students especially from marginalized regions, in particular, are able to study for a degree and benefit from the proposed policy [2].

Conclusion:

This whitepaper project makes it clear that the Government should not relent on its commitment to wider participation and fair access to higher education. The aim of these recommendations was to build a new national consensus between individuals, government and businesses as to how higher education system in Sudan should be supported, adapted and expanded in order to help national reconciliation after a decade of civil war.

We can only hope to achieve this through effective partnerships with universities themselves. Indeed, while we have pointed to a number of things that Government can do, either directly or working with the funding bodies, the responsibility for success lies principally with higher education institutions themselves.

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